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ED 016 450 JC 670 561

COUNSELING JUNIOR COLLEGE BOUND STUDENTS.

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ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE ADMISSIONS COUNSELORS

PUB DATE 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.24 4P.

DESCRIPTORS- *JUNIOR COLLEGES, *COUNSELING, COUNSELOR FUNCTIONS, COUNSELOR ROLE, *CAREER CHOICE, *STUDENT COLLEGE RELATIONSHIP, COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT, STATUS, *TRANSFER STUDENTS,

PROSPECTIVE JUNIOR COLLEGE STUDENTS SHOULD BE AWARE OF DIFFICULTIES THEY MAY ENCOUNTER IN SUCH MATTERS AS (1) INADEQUACIES OF FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT, (2) PROGRAM DEFICIENCES, (3) SHORTAGES OF ADEQUATE STAFF, (4) TRANSFER PROBLEMS, AND (5) STATUS AND PRESTIGE FACTORS. COUNSELORS SHOULD HELP STUDENTS TO APPRAISE BOTH THE POSITIVE AND THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THEIR CHOICES OF COURSES, CAREERS, AND COLLEGES. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "THE JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE ADMISSIONS COUNSELORS," VOLUME 12, NUMBER 3, SUMMER 1967. (HH)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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JUL 17 1967

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THE JOURNAL OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGE
ADMISSIONS
COUNSELORS
VOLUME 12, NUMBER 3

The Association of College Admissions Counselors is a national organization of regionally accredited colleges and universities, secondary schools, and educational associations concerned with the transition of students from school to college. It is governed by an elected Executive Board and two Advisory Boards. Each member institution is entitled to one vote in Association matters.

The Journal is a professional publication devoted to articles in the field of counseling, admissions, and financial aid. It is published quarterly at the national office of the Association of College Admissions Counselors. Each member school, college, and association is entitled to four subscriptions at no charge. Additional subscriptions may be ordered, and back numbers of most issues are available

The subscription rate is $4.00 per year, or $10.00 for 3 years. Single copies, when available, are $1.50.

Contributions and correspondence should be addressed to Mrs. James Ramsay, editor, The ACAC Journal, 610 Church Street, Evanston, Illinois. Contributions for publication are welcome from all persons in education and related fields, but those unaccompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope cannot be returned.

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Counseling Junior College Bound Students

David C. Epperson

RECENTLY we have heard much about plans for the expansion of junior colleges throughout the nation. In Illinois, for example, the Master Plan studies projected nearly a 100 per cent increase in public junior colleges over a five-year period. Similar growth is occurring in many states. I would like to outline the kinds of problems I anticipate in the future in connection with our efforts to build an expanded system of community colleges, problems which have significant consequences for students choosing the two-year institution.

In the news media in many communities we find numerous stories, prepared by the developers of junior colleges, describing the benefits of having a local two-year institution. The arguments presented in these releases are aimed at employers in the area who stand to benefit from receiving better trained technicians and at parents who are financially unable to send their children away to a college outside the community. To this pragmatic appeal are added statements pointing up the egalitarian advantages of being able to provide enough institutions of higher learning so that each student who desires can receive an education commensurate with his abilities.

It is difficult to argue against these goals. Certainly we should strive to provide maximum educational opportunity. However, we are not assured that each student is, in fact, going to receive an education commensurate with his capacities simply because we have established an institutional structure. We must concern ourselves with the quality of education that can be provided within the framework of these emerging colleges.

I am persuaded that we have a serious responsibility to apprise prospective junior college students of the difficulties they may very well encounter while attending one of our two-year colleges-in-transition. It is my thesis that it is incumbent upon those who will be counseling students regarding their plans for higher education to offer a *realistic* image of what to expect from the various alternatives open to college-age youth.

What are the pressing problems faced by the developing two-year institutions that have significant consequences for students? In answering this question, I will focus on those problems that have direct effects on students. While I am sympathetic and concerned about the impact of the problems on both administrators and teachers, I will attend to these growth pains as they affect the student, since it is the student with whom counselors are concerned.

First of all, let us look at the effects of limited space and equipment on the increasing population of students. We are well aware that the present facilities of most junior colleges are inadequate to serve those currently in attendance. It takes much space and equipment to educate college students, especially in one of the technical fields. It seems realistic to expect that space and equipment in the immediate future will be inadequate to serve the needs of those to whom we are committed.

Under the best of conditions, it is difficult to build a viable educational community in a commuter college, and the best of conditions are un-

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likely to prevail in the years immediately ahead. With makeshift facilities, which are destined to be our fate for the next decade, the junior college student can expect to have difficulty in trying to achieve an identity with an institution that is, for all intents and purposes, barely existent. A student who selects a junior college should understand that these conditions of flux are to be expected.

In order for junior colleges to build quality programs, it will be necessary to recruit, train, and retain good staff members. At the present time, even without the expansion that is planned, it is difficult to recruit staff, both administrators and teachers, who are trained to handle the unique problems confronting these colleges. With hundreds of new institutions throughout the nation in various stages of planning, we can expect even more acute staffing problems. One of the alarming circumstances, at the present moment, is that administrators and institutional planners are so absorbed in the issues of districting, building, and financing that little time and energy is left to devote to the very important issues of staffing and program building.

What are the consequences for the student of program deficiencies and staff shortages? Certainly the short-term program deficiencies that arise from having education administered by unqualified teachers and administrators are distressing to consider. The long-term consequences of a poorly prepared staff are even more frightening. If administrators and teachers are scrambling just to keep up with the influx of students, little time will be available to seek truly imaginative solutions to the complex problems these institutions face. Under-prepared staff members are quite likely to parrot educational practices and programs currently in use in either high schools or four-year institutions, practices that may be quite unsuitable for junior college students, especially those in vocational, technical, and remedial programs. Students will experience these problems in the form of irrelevant and uninspiring instruction. I believe it is our responsibility to forewarn them of the possibility of poorly conceived learning experiences in our emerging two-year colleges.

Furthermore, the data accumulated at colleges and universities throughout the country suggest that, even at the present time, there are numerous junior colleges where students are being inappropriately prepared for transfer to four-year institutions. The attrition rate at colleges and universities for transfer students from some junior colleges reaches tragic proportions. Students from others do exceedingly well. This suggests that some existing transfer programs are far from adequate.

What then can we expect in the future? It seems that the only fair way to deal with this problem is to supply students planning transfer with information that provides a basis for comparing their chances of successfully transferring to various four-year institutions from each of several available two-year colleges. Currently, comparative data necessary for making an appropriate educational choice is seldom, if ever, available.

Other Institutions, too, Have Problems with Consequences for Students

Before proceeding further, it seems important to make one point very clear. While I am challenging counselors to paint a realistic image of the consequences for a student of choosing to attend a junior college, I believe it is also their responsibility to accurately portray the consequences of choosing any other type of institution of higher learning. The large, complex, multipurpose institution, for example, has its unique problems also. The consequences for the student of large classes, impersonal environments, etc., at the large state

university should be discussed with the prospective college student.

To raise a voice of caution about the expectations for the emerging junior colleges seems in a way heretical, for all of us committed to a large-scale expansion of education beyond high school expect much from the comprehensive community college. However, if we are to be honest with ourselves and with our students, we must temper our enthusiasm while counseling these students in order to help them establish realistic expectations.

The most perplexing problems in trying to work with students planning education beyond high school are those dealing with the social status issues that accompany the selection of an educational program. Recently, a research study of high school students by a University of Chicago sociologist reported the high degree of pressure to get into college that suburban students experience from those around them. The impact of this pressure is revealed in the high incidence of cheating that students report. Over half of the students reported having cheated in order to get good grades. With an atmosphere in our homes and schools that attaches so much importance to getting the kinds of grades that will permit one to go to the "right" college, those who choose to go to a junior college are likely to think of themselves as second-class citizens. In the future this status issue is probably going to get much more pronounced before it gets better. How then does being a student in what is considered by some as nothing more than a glorified high school affect the student's dignity and self-esteem? Furthermore, in every junior college that has both a transfer program and a terminal program, there are status distinctions made between these two groups.

It is my opinion that students choosing to go to a junior college should be given an opportunity to face up to the realities of these status issues. They *are* going to be considered second-class citizens by many of their peers if they choose a junior college, and in addition, those who choose a terminal, vocational, or technical program *will* be considered by some as second-class citizens among second-class citizens. This is one more reality about the junior college movement which understandably does not appear in the press releases from the citizens' committees promoting the establishment or expansion of these new institutions.

There is no intention here to be critical of dedicated educators and laymen who sense a responsibility to the community to promote the extension of educational opportunity to all who desire it. They are to be commended and applauded for their actions. However, the counselor's responsibility is not only to the community at large, but to those individuals who sit across from them who are trying to get together adequate information in order to make a life's choice. Our responsibility is to provide them with an accurate picture of reality, with its negative, as well as its positive, components. Only when students have the facts will they be able to make intelligent judgments.

Summary

In summary, I have tried to call attention to several problems that junior colleges are now facing and will face in the future that have consequences for students. My appeal has been to be honest by informing students to the best of our ability about the potential consequences of choosing a junior college education. If they go into the situation with the best information we can provide, they are much more likely to establish realistic expectations for their education.

The great strength of our American higher education system resides in its diversity. Hence, counselors should emphasize this diversity by pointing out the unique characteristics, including both strengths and weaknesses, of each alternative open to the student. The counselor's responsibility is first of all to the student. Other members of the educational community will assume responsibility for promoting the various components in our developing system of higher education.

Excerpts from an article by Fred M. Hechinger in the 1967 *Compton Yearbook*

Today's junior college has created a revolution in education and will play a leading role in the extension of universal education beyond the high school level. The junior college is a new hybrid – the ideal instrument to cope with the dilemma of the lack of work for the uneducated and the need for skilled technicians and experts to fill available jobs.

It is especially equipped to furnish highly competent manpower on the levels at which shortages exist. It is an extension of the American tradition of leaving the door open to a wide variety of opportunities and educational, as well as career, choices.